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PREACHED AT

ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH, WESTMINSTER,

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THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1789,

THE DAY OF PUBLICK THANKSGIVING FOR
HIS MAJESTY'S HAPPY RECOVERY.

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BY SAMUEL HAYES, A. M.
LATE SENIOR USHER OF WESTMINSTER SCHOOL.

PUBLISHED BY DESIRE.

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ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH

WEDNESDAY

ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH

1892

THURSDAY

THE DAY OF THE LORD
HIS MAJESTY HARRY ROBERT

BY SAMUEL HAYES

LATE SENIOR CHURCH OF WESTMINSTER

PUBLISHED BY

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S E R M O N.

PSALM cxxvi. ver. 4.

THE LORD HATH DONE GREAT THINGS FOR US AL-
READY, WHEREOF WE REJOICE.

IT is no small symptom of that allay which has corrupted our nature, that we are so sensible of any trouble which disquiets us, of any calamity which afflicts us, and yet so little mindful of those many supports and conveniences which God, in his mercy, affords us. But whoever considers that the design of all his blessings is to refine us from this baseness, and to renew a right spirit within us, will carefully improve all opportunities, both publick and

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private,

private, which call us to thanksgiving; because gratitude is the highest perfection of rational beings, the most exalted service a soul is capable of paying to God.

It is a doctrine, taught us by natural reason, and confirmed by observation and experience, as well as inculcated by Scripture, and illustrated by many instances there recorded for our instruction and admonition, that as God created the world by the word of his power, so he directs and governs it by his wisdom and providence. Although, when the heavens and the earth were made, and all the host of them, it is said, that he rested from all his work which he had then displayed, it is not meant thereby, that he relinquished his divine agency, and resigned himself up to a state of indolence and inaction, but only that the work of creation was finished, and the system of the universe so adjusted and disposed,

posed, that things, without more than his ordinary concurrence, would go on in that established and stated order, called the course of nature. By this we mean that method, according to which the Author of nature chooses to display his wisdom and power in the conduct and œconomy of the world. It does by no means derogate from the happiness of his nature, to suppose him thus constantly employed in preserving and regulating the works of his own hands; nor from the perfection of those works, that they want his constant influence for their preservation and direction. But it gives us a much nobler idea of the Supreme Being; a more awful, as well as a more amiable, sense of his attributes, to conceive him always present to every part of the universe, and always active in it; adjusting all its springs and movements, and guiding its operations, or controuling and suspending them; preserving that wonderful regularity amidst almost infinite

variety, or, on extraordinary occasions, in a more amazing manner, deviating from it.

This notion gives us a much more exalted conception of God, than to imagine him, as some have done, wrapt up in the contemplation of his own happiness, and regardless of that of all other beings; leaving the world to the guidance of chance, too uncertain and too capricious to be depended on, or of fate, too certain to be arrested, or altered. Thus, when the sun rejoiceth, as a giant, to run his appointed course, and knoweth his going down, he declares the glory of God; and he made the same declaration, though in a more astonishing manner, when he once stood still by the same divine appointment.

But though the senseless and unintelligent parts of the creation are equally the objects of God's power; it is the rational part only, that
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are the subjects of his government and laws. It is over moral and free agents, that the Lord, properly speaking, reigneth; over those who obey out of understanding and choice, not necessity and constraint; who are capable of apprehending the reasonableness and fitness of their obedience, and can be influenced by a sense of duty and gratitude to him, of whose power they are the creatures, and on whose providence they are dependents. The heavens, and every thing in the material world, declare the God, yet are insensible of it themselves. But the subjects of his moral kingdom glorify him most effectually, when they pay him that obedience through choice, which it is in their choice to refuse.

In this sense the people of the Jews were, most peculiarly and eminently, the subjects of God's kingdom. The avowed and explicit interpositions of the Deity in their behalf against the arm
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of idolatrous power, were grand and manifold. They were obligated therefore, in an especial manner, to acknowledge the God of their salvation, and to be grateful for those mercies which the light of his countenance shed upon them. Hence originated the numerous and rigid ceremonies which bound the sons of Israel in the external worship of the Lord. They were instituted, in order that a remembrance of what God had done for them might keep them steady in the performance of their requisite duties, and by shewing them where confidence could alone be securely placed, prevent them from falling into that depraved state of licentiousness and idolatry which the nations around them exhibited.

The mercy indeed of the Supreme Being, which he has vouchsafed to dispense in these latter times, has precluded the necessity of such visible interpositions in favour of those whom he
accepts.

accepts. Yet we are still bound by as great, if not greater, obligations, than the Jews were, to celebrate the goodness of Heaven, and to rejoice because *the Lord hath done great things for us*. That we exist, we are indebted to him—And whatever comforts have already attended this existence, whatever we now enjoy, have been, and are derived from him alone. And all we hope for in our further continuance here, must flow from the same divine source. But, in addition to these blessings, besides our *creation* and *preservation*, we have the *means of grace* and the *hope of glory* conferred upon us. A future state is no longer enveloped in darkness, no longer a matter of doubt and uncertainty; nor does it any longer depend on the loose fictions of fancy, or rest upon the determinations which human learning and sagacity have made. Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel, and the terms, on which eternal happiness may
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be secured, are so clearly propounded, that no one can plead inability to comprehend them.

Such are the superior advantages that the Christian world at large enjoys; advantages surely for which, as they are of inestimable value, and transcend the powers of conception, we ought *to rejoice with exceeding great joy.*

That, in addition to these general blessings, we, as an individual nation, have received many more which claim the tribute of gratitude and thanksgiving, no one, acquainted with the annals of this country, can deny. If wealth and power be conducive to national happiness, there are few, if any, regions which can stand in competition with us, either in opulence, or extensive commerce; and if security of possession be a blessing to individuals, what people enjoy it with less to apprehend from the efforts of violence,
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and the tyranny of oppression? Though we cannot, in any season of the year, display those luxuriant scenes of vegetation, which some climates boast a perpetuity of, we are, at the same time, strangers to those concussions of the elements, which frequently, and in a moment, lay waste the beauties of nature, and leave the miserable natives without provision, or habitation. If to be free from the wantonness of arbitrary controul, to exercise a religion pure and undefiled, if these be advantages worthy the pursuit of a rational being, let us be thankful that we can call them ours. Numerous have been the attempts to overthrow the liberties of this happy country, and manifold have been the schemes to subvert its religion, yet they have all hitherto, though supported by the exertions of earthly power, proved unsuccessful. We have been rescued by God from the most imminent dangers with a *mighty hand* and with a *stretched*

out arm; we have therefore the greatest reason to acknowledge, that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and to say with the Psalmist, The Lord hath done great things for us already, whereof we rejoice.

If our joy then be sincere, and such as ought to flow from a conviction of the mercies of God thus abundantly showered down upon us, it will naturally excite us to the discharge of our religious duties; for we cannot surely ascribe our present happiness to the protection of our Almighty Father, without being fully convinced that the continuation of it must wholly depend upon his will. If we acknowledge that he has given, the same power undoubtedly, it must be confessed, can take away—Our temporal interest therefore here coincides with our duty. Publick security can alone be maintained by publick virtue,

tue, and this can only be effectually promoted by the diligent co-operation of individuals.

A nation, abounding in wealth and riches, amply provided with those resources, which are supposed capable of giving strength and energy to military operations, may, upon the confidence of these auxiliaries, think itself secure, and may, consequently, look with contempt upon the menaces of human opposition. But if prosperity hath made them thus self-sufficient, and if this self-sufficiency shakes the pillars of their dependance on God, and induces them to place implicit reliance on their opulence, or their military armaments, *he that sitteth in the heavens may laugh them to scorn, the Lord may have them in derision.* And if they have rejoiced before on account of national prosperity, because *the Lord had done great things for them*, they may, by a reverse of circumstances, mourn in sackcloth and

ashes, because his hand is stretched out against them, and because he deems those unworthy of his favours, who have the ingratitude to forget the author of them.—That we, who now rejoice, may avoid such dreadful calamities, let us never forget the tender mercies of our God! Let us be obedient to that Supreme Power, *who hath already done great things for us!* Let us venerate his holy commands, and faithfully walk in those paths which he hath prescribed, for he hath assured us, that he will *honour those who honour him*, and *if God be for us, who can be against us?*—

In every age, and in every nation of the world, mankind have been induced, from a consciousness of their dependence on almighty power, to set apart certain times for publick adoration. This they have done when, national distresses surrounded them, in order that, by conciliating the mercy of
Heaven,

Heaven, they might alleviate their calamities, and avert the miserable consequences of future judgments. They also adopted the mode of publick worship, when fortune smiled upon their endeavours; and whenever any signal event had either effected their happiness, or secured a continuation of their temporal welfare, they assembled together, and commemorated the goodness of that Being who had thus graciously interposed in their behalf. If we acknowledge, and believe, the superintendence of an Almighty God, it is surely our bounden duty to return our most sincere thanks for those benefits which his providence vouchsafes to impart. It is no less our certain interest to do this in the most publick manner, that a sense of religion may be the more deeply impressed upon our own minds, and that by letting *our light thus shine before men*, others may feel the important influence of piety, and be led to *glorify our Father which is in heaven*.

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The event which on this day brings us to the temple of our God, and requires from us the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, is not a trivial one. No person, who thinks national tranquillity an object of importance, or believes that publick felicity is secured and confirmed by the virtue of those who govern, can on this occasion refuse the tribute of religious gratitude. In private families it is a matter of great concern whether the conduct of those who superintend them be regulated by principles of temperance and prudence, or not. Disorder, confusion, and complicated miseries inevitably result from mismanagement, and licentious inattention. Societies are made up of many families, all united together under one head for the promotion of general good, and bound by the coercion of particular laws to which they have all given their assent. If the person, with whom the proper execution of these laws ultimately rests, be corrupt,

rupt, profligate, and regardless of the solemn trust reposed in him, what can individuals expect from such a government? Is it possible that the streams which flow from such a foul and vitiated source can be other than baneful and poisonous? Elevated examples operate most powerfully on the inferior orders of society, and history informs us, that when the manners of a court were licentious and depraved, those of the people have suffered by the contagion, and been in like manner dissipated and abandoned. Thanks be to God, this is far, as far as possible, from being our case at present. If the virtues of royalty ever were entitled to respect and veneration, we may, without fear of the censure of servile flattery, now pay them that pure homage. Envy is always ready to depreciate and calumniate that worth which it cannot reach, and eager to sully that purity which it cannot but admire; yet with all its ingenuity, and all its malignant zeal, the

effort here has been ineffectual. An irrefragable proof undoubtedly that no imputation can be fixed on the character of our Sovereign with any degree of plausibility to make it credible. It cannot then be matter of wonder, that the alarming malady with which it pleased Divine Providence to afflict our most gracious Sovereign, should have caused a general gloom, and should have induced us to offer up to Heaven our fervent prayers for his recovery, or that the happy re-establishment of his health should now be a subject of universal joy, and bring us to the temple of our God with grateful acknowledgements of his mercy and goodness.

That this signal interposition of the Deity in our favour may have its full effect upon us, and awaken in our breasts a due sense of our duty, his Majesty this day, in the most solemn and publick manner, prostrates himself before the
throne

throne of that Being who hath vouchsafed to rescue him from the bed of sickness, and re-instate him in his former health, both of body and mind. Though sensible what a pleasing triumph awaited his publick appearance, that he would then receive the exalted tribute, for which alone regal power is enviable, the sincere blessings of a free and loyal nation, religious duty hath hitherto superseded that pleasure. His first appearance among his faithful subjects is consecrated by an unequivocal testimony of his religious sentiments, a testimonial surely which will, if possible, increase our attachment to him, and by making us thoroughly sensible of the inestimable good we now enjoy, induce us so to order our lives, that it may please the Almighty to continue us long in the happy possession of it.—God forbid that so distinguished an example of piety should be deficient in working its proper effect on our minds! The

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sincere demonstrations of joy indeed, which his Majesty's recovery has excited among all ranks of people, can arise from no other cause, than a firm belief that national tranquillity and publick welfare are established by it. A belief that must assuredly induce us to adopt those means by which such an establishment may be rendered permanent.—May we all then, conscious that we are assembled here to celebrate the goodness of God, zealously perform those duties which will secure to us the gracious influence of his saving health! And as our happiness depends so much upon the government of a righteous King, I cannot better conclude than with that solemn address to Heaven, prescribed in our form of prayer, an address in which, I hope, the heart of every one here present will sincerely join me. “O
 “ Lord our heavenly Father, high and mighty,
 “ King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the only Ruler
 “ of Princes, who dost from thy throne behold all

“ the dwellers upon earth; most heartily we be-
 “ seech thee with thy favour to behold our most
 “ gracious Sovereign Lord King George; and so
 “ replenish him with the grace of thy Holy
 “ Spirit, that he may alway incline to thy will,
 “ and walk in thy way : Endue him plenteously
 “ with heavenly gifts; grant him in health and
 “ wealth long to live; strengthen him that he
 “ may vanquish and overcome all his enemies;
 “ and finally, after this life, he may attain ever-
 “ lasting joy and felicity, through Jesus Christ
 “ our Lord. Amen.”

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"the dwellers upon earth; most dearly we do
"rejoice thee with thy favour to behold our most
"precious Sovereign Lord King-God, yet not to
"rejoice him with the grace of thy Holy
"Spirit, that he may away from us to thy will,
"and walk in thy way: O Lord, strengthen us
"with heavenly gifts: grant him in health and
"wealth long to live; strengthen him that he
"may vanquish and overcome all his enemies;
"and finally, when this life he may attain even
"lasting joy and felicity, through Jesus Christ
"our Lord. Amen."